

Polk State College Faculty Senate Minutes
Date: April 13, 2026
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Held via Zoom (recorded)
Steering Committee to Meet Following the Senate Meeting

Officers:

Anthony Cornett, President (present)
Greg Harris, Vice President for the Winter Haven Campus (present)
Jess Jones, Vice President for the Lakeland Campus (present)
Heather Childree, Secretary (present)
Michael Derry, Parliamentarian (present—joined around 4:00 p.m.)

Others:

Chris Botelho, Senator at Large (present)
Amy Bratten, Provost and Administrative Liaison (present)

Attending Senators: Heather Childree, Lee Childree, Jess Jones, Greg Harris, John Woodward, Chris Botelho, Misty Sparling, Andrew Coombs, Laura Brimer, Kari Misa, Andrea Hofeditz, Dirk Valk, Michelle Bissessar, Johnny Stewart, Niqui Young-Pringle-Brown, Gwyn Phillips, John Barberet, Gregory Johnson, and Michael Derry

Faculty Attendees: Lynsay McCaulley, Heena Park, Melissa Shapiro, Matina Wagner, Susie Moerschbacher, Nathaniel King, Pam Jones, Tiffany Lowden [Messerschmitt], Kim Hess, Suzy Vanbenthuyzen, Jacqueline Gray, Nerissa Felder, Jennifer Shaw, Penny Morris, Aaron Morgan, Christy McCullough, Consuela Bonney, Jim Davis, and Alison Sutton

Presenting Guests and Others:

Presenting: Yvonne Velez (Coordinator of Human Resources) and Dani Chandonnet (Director of Student Enrollment/Registrar)

Non-Presenting: James Gibbons (Pro/Tech: CNC and Machining), Deleise Wilson (Dean of Nursing), Cody Moyer (Director of Learning Technology), Shana Kent-Smith (Associate Dean), Reggie Webb (Senior VP of Student Services and Campus Operations, Calendar Committee Co-Chair with Provost Amy Bratten)

The meeting began at 3:01 p.m.

I. Approval of the Minutes from the March 2026 Senate Meeting

Greg Harris motioned to approve the *March 2026 Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes*. Chris Botelho seconded the motion. The motion carried.

II. Approval of the April 2026 Faculty Senate Meeting Agenda



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Greg Harris motioned to approve the *April 2026 Faculty Senate Meeting Agenda*. Misty Sparling seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Anthony Cornett indicated a request to move the *Academic Calendar for 2026-2027* discussion to earlier in the agenda. As Michael Derry was not yet present [arrived at 4 p.m.], Anthony asked Greg Harris [former Parliamentarian] to determine if a vote is needed to move the item.

Greg motioned to adjust the agenda so that the *Academic Calendar for 2026-2027* was moved to the top. Laura Brimer seconded the motion. The motion carried.

III. Faculty Senate Officer and Administrative Liaison Reports

Faculty Senate President's Report (Anthony Cornett)

Anthony said that he met twice with Dr. Kerr since the last Faculty Senate meeting (once in-person and once by phone).

Collegiate Faculty Pay and Budget-Neutral Hirings

The Collegiate Faculty pay discussion came up as did the new Administration positions. He was told the new positions are budget neutral with the Vice President of HR/Legal [David Fugett] and the Director of HR [Felipe Garces] leaving recently.

Faculty Salaries

Anthony and Dr. Kerr talked about having a round-table discussion about Faculty salaries to include Amy Bratten, Dr. Kerr, and Cindy Baker [VP of Finance].

District Board of Trustees (DBOT) Rule 1.10: Selection of the College President

Anthony could not attend the last DBOT meeting, but Rule 1.10 passed with little discussion. This is the Rule that was not brought to Faculty Senate [bypassed Rule DBOT Rule 2.24 and Procedure 6073].

Streamlining Rules and Procedures: MK Consulting

In a process initiated by Dr. Falconetti, MK Consulting is to streamline the College's Rules and Procedures. This is a DBOT-mandated action.

- **Jess Jones** asked what is meant by “streamline.”
 - **Anthony** said he does not know what is meant by “streamline.” He doesn't know much aside from that the job is to make sure the College's procedures fall within the correct Florida and federal statutes and DOE rules.
- **Jess** asked what the company's expertise is, which would allow it to make those decisions.
 - **Anthony** said he did not know what the company's expertise is.
- **Jennifer** stated that these need to go through Senate per DBOT Rule 2.24.
- **Aaron** commented that this is not shared governance.
- **Anthony** agreed that it does not sound like shared governance. He was surprised they would be using a consulting firm. He doesn't have all the information and will update the Senate as he hears more. He wondered how this will affect the



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five-year schedule for reviewing Rules and Procedures [for SACSCOC], especially since Administration has only reviewed/updated 20% of the Rules and Procedures in the last five years.

- **Jennifer** reminded the Senate that Administration had already written to SACSCOC and been given an extension because it was out of compliance with review of Rules and Procedures, and that it is odd that Administration has not progressed much.

Faculty Mentoring Students

Anthony asked how Faculty feel about mentoring students (like a four-year institution) in their chosen fields. Faculty would not be Advisors but mentors or guides.

- **Jess** said that Faculty already do this all the time; it's just not announced or in a formal program.

Lakeland Campus Vice President's Report (Jess Jones)—None

Winter Haven Campus Vice President's Report (Greg Harris)—None

Parliamentarian's Report (Michael Derry)—None

Academic Liaison Report (Provost Amy Bratten)

Professional Development Day

Presenters were asked to send presentations to be archived in PIE [College's Intranet: Polk Information Essentials].

Summer Enrollment

Summer enrollment appears higher than last year, but Administration has not dropped for non-payment yet. There is demand for science classes but not enough sections. The College is trying to recruit adjuncts and get them onboarded, which is a lengthy process. Advisors are keeping lists of students' course requests. Dr. Kerr has directed the College to make course sections available.

- **Jess Jones** asked about spring enrollment data, as he needs that information and the numbers looked different than expected. Knowing the change helps with planning in the future. Jess also asked if DCs (Department Coordinators) will be consulted or if the adjuncts will be "plopped into [his] lap." He said that summer isn't a good time to hire new adjuncts as there are many parts to coordinate with science labs and little time for planning and preparation.
- **Provost Amy Bratten** said she's voiced that concern, but that the College needs to balance the need with qualified, high-quality instruction.
- **Jess** recommended raising the summer [adjunct] salary to entice the College's full-time Faculty to teach during the summer at Polk. Summer teaching is not required, and Faculty work elsewhere in the summer to make more money teaching the same classes.



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- **Jennifer Shaw** said that she's receiving emails requesting overrides because her Anatomy and Physiology II class is full. She's approving the requests but asked if there's an override cap. She is telling students to wait for the purge [for nonpayment or not passing A&P I] to look for open spots. She wondered what else she could offer the students.
- **Provost Bratten** said to inform them that students would be dropped for nonpayment and to contact an Academic Advisor. Dawnetta [Wearing, Student Services Manager] is keeping a list of students' course requests.
- **Jennifer** said she has mentored summer A&P I instructors in the past, and it has been a train-wreck because of the complexity. She told Amy that she is willing to teach another A&P class [as a solution], as Procedure 1006: *Faculty Workload* allows for Administration to override teaching-maximums.
- **Gregory Johnson** stated that he struggles with the lack of data provided by the College. He asked if students can be provided with a *Wait List* button on the course registration page. This would put students in the loop and allow for data-driven decisions.
- **Provost Bratten** said Banner used to have a *Wait List* button; she doesn't know where it went. The President's directive to "make things happen" came last week. Amy will contact Marty [Gang, Institutional Technology/CIO] when the Faculty Senate meeting is over.
- **Jess** said that Banner has a *Wait List* capability, but it was removed because it wasn't working as intended. A recently opened seat could be taken by a student who was not on the Banner *Wait List* (rather than pulling from the list). He said there is an ability to offer online science classes, but the Nursing Program doesn't want online offerings, making it hard to schedule.
- **Provost Bratten** said that there are facility limitations too. She said there will be a meeting to discuss these issues.
- **Jennifer** asked if a decision could be provided about online A&P classes based on her research and her meeting with Amy. She said it is difficult to form a schedule for the department.
- **Provost Bratten** said she was waiting to have a meeting to get input.

IV. Committee Reports and Updates

Anatomy and Physiology Hiring Committee

Jess Jones reported on this search committee. The Science Department was approved to hire three Faculty. Offers were made, but Jess does not know the status.

Art Gallery: Student Showcase: April 28 from 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Andrew Coombs announced the Student Showcase. Awards will be given at 5:30 p.m.

10th Annual Digital Media Student Showcase: May 9, at 3:00 p.m. (LTB 1100)

Gregory Johnson announced the Digital Media Student Showcase. There will be a red carpet, 200+ people, and presidential teleprompters. Last year's event was standing-



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room only. He encouraged everyone to come and bring family and friends. This will be Gregory's last showcase before leaving the College.

Canvas Course Accessibility

Niqui Young-Pringle-Brown reminded Faculty to follow course accessibility protocol.

V. Old Business

A. District Board of Trustees Rule 1.10: Selection and Appointment of the College

President

Anthony Cornett informed the Senate that the DBOT passed Rule 1.10: *Selection and Appointment of the College President*. He confirmed **Jennifer Shaw's** question that Procedure 6073: *Procedure on Rules and Procedures* and DBOT Rule 2.24 was not followed in the passage of this item.

B. Collegiate Salary Issues and Administration Usage of Teacher Salary Increase

Allocation (TSIA) Funding

Anthony Cornett said that the only update he has received is that Dr. Kerr said there is an investigation by Provost Bratten's office and legal counsel.

- **Provost Amy Bratten** said that Dr. Kerr wants Administration to meet with the high school Faculty and Staff once the investigation is complete. She does not know when that meeting will happen.
- **Misty Sparling** noted that she, Lynsay McCaulley, Christy McCullough (and a few others) are whistleblowers and have not received their Faculty Annual Evaluation ratings. She respectfully expresses the group's expectation that there be no "retaliatory action for their efforts to bring forward these concerns." They hope this issue with Faculty compensation does not affect their evaluations or employment status. Per Dean Reyes's [Dean of Early College]direction, they have sent in a public records request for information.
- **Provost Bratten** asked when Misty would normally receive the evaluation.
- **Misty** replied before April 1.
- **Christy McCullough** said that she has never had more than a week pass between an observation and the evaluation write up. It's now been about 3 weeks. She said that the investigation should be a straightforward process because there is a schedule with instructions. Faculty members' questions to Administration [sent several months ago] have not been answered—it should not take this long.
- **Christy** mentioned the struggle to find science teachers. She said there aren't many in the state. Last year, the whole state added only 9 physics teachers and 17 math teachers were added. The College wants the best-of-the-best at the high schools and expects more work than Polk County Schools; therefore, they should be compensated at least as well. Christy said she teaches high school A&P and has worked with College Faculty to ensure her students are prepared for the next level. She said that to get quality instructors, those instructors must be rewarded.



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- **Misty** had Heather Childree post the TSIA form directing what is permitted regarding the use of TSIA funds. [*This document is in the April Senate PIE folder.*]
- **Anthony** stated that prior Collegiate TSIA documentation is in the Senate's March PIE folder.

Gregory Harris motioned to extend the meeting. Jess Jones seconded. The motion carried.

VI. New Business

A. Review of the Draft 2026-2027 Academic Calendar

[Note: *The Academic Calendar was discussed as the first item of business.*]

Registrar Dani Chandonnett presented the *Draft 2026-2027 Academic Calendar*.

- **Tiffany Lowden** asked why the Thanksgiving Monday in Fall 2026 is on the calendar, but not the Tuesday [normally both are instructional days]. She said that Polk County Schools have the whole week off, and it could be burdensome for some to attend only one day of the week.
- **Provost Amy Bratten** [Calendar Committee Co-Chair] said that if the College got rid of that Monday, the semester would be short on Mondays.
- **Tiffany** added that her kids are older, and she doesn't teach on Mondays, but she worries for others [with children].
- **Jennifer Shaw** said she's concerned because there's no break between terms. The calendar moves straight from spring to summer to fall without a 1-2 day respite. There are also some errors with dates. She said there should be 48 days in the [Summer 12-week] term, but there are 49 days [M-Th classes].
- **Registrar Dani** asked for clarification.
- **Jennifer** said that the end of the Summer 2027 12-week Term abuts to the start of Fall 2027. It ends on Wednesday and we report back on Thursday. [**Note:** *The Faculty Senate Secretary thinks that Jennifer means Summer 2026 into Fall 2026.*]
- **Provost Bratten** said that classes end Tuesday, August 3 [Summer 2027] and asked if Jennifer was looking at the calendar in PIE.
- **Jennifer** said that the day count is wrong-- an extra day has been added that Faculty don't get paid for.
- **Provost Bratten** said there was nothing the Calendar Committee could do about the extra day, that there cannot be one day less. The term did not work out in the exact amount. Payment for the [fall and spring] semester is by base pay; Faculty are not paid by the day.
- **Jennifer** said that Faculty with summer overloads are paid as adjuncts [by contact hour], and that Faculty should not be working an extra day. [**Note:** *An additional day increases the contact hours for any class that meets on that day.*]
- **Provost Bratten** said that contact hours are calculated by credit hours.
- **Jennifer** asked how that extra day was added.



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- **Provost Bratten** said that Faculty should look at the Calendar Committee notes because they would have addressed that in the committee meeting minutes. [**Note:** *There are no Calendar Committee meeting minutes for the September 19, or October 15, 2025, meetings available via PIE, the website, or email.*]
- **Jennifer** said the extra day throws the teaching schedule for labs off track, adding a lab; she would have to add a new lab or cancel a class.
- **Provost Bratten** said she cannot comment about that as she is a non-science instructor. The Science Faculty would need to discuss that.
- **Andrew Coombs** said that the class Registration date for the Fall 2026 Semester starts after the Spring 2026 Semester ends. He said if Registration started before the end of the Spring Semester, it would better enable Faculty to recruit enrollment.
- **Registrar Dani** said she would take that suggestion back to the committee.
- **Kari Misa** said that Summer Semester 2026 rolling into Fall Semester 2026 [early Fall 2026 start date of Aug 10] is problematic. Grades are due Wednesday, August 5, and convocation is the next day with no day off. Math Department Faculty are asking about why the semester is starting so early to then have [part of] Thanksgiving off and then move straight into final exams. A better allocation would be to have Thanksgiving off, return with a week to review, and then have finals week. It's not best for students to have a week off and then jump into finals.
- **Jennifer** said if there's an active hurricane season, Science Faculty need time during Thanksgiving break to make up labs.
- **Provost Bratten** said this will be sent to the Calendar Committee for next year.
- **Anthony Cornett** said [referring to the August 9 Fall 2027 start date] that classes must begin on or after August 10, or the College must have permission from the Chancellor of Education [FAC Rule 6A-10.019].
- **Registrar Dani** said Administration is aware of that. The process is to submit the calendar to the DBOT and then the state. Once the state approves, the calendar will go live. One of the steps is to submit it to the Chancellor.
- **John Barberet** supported Andrew's suggestion of increasing enrollment by moving the Registration dates up. He said his constituents are also concerned about the extra day [in the Summer 2027 Semester] that Jennifer brought up. He raised concerns about days randomly being added to the calendar and wondered what the rules were for adding workdays. He said this was a slippery slope.
- **Provost Bratten** said that the College is given ranges. It's not random days being added. Hopefully those on the committee are talking to their departments about issues that develop during committee meetings.
- **John Barberet** said that, as we have seen with history, whoever controls the calendar controls society, which is why he is concerned.
- **Provost Bratten** agreed with the suggestion that committee member rosters should be posted to PIE. [**Note:** *Procedure 6002 indicates the rosters are on file in the President's Office; member appointment is coordinated through the VP of Academics.*]
- **Kari** asked if all College offices are shut down for Winter Break, including those for student enrollment.



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- **Provost Bratten** said there's a skeleton crew that works.
- **Kari** asked if the College could provide Advising for student need.
- **Vice President Webb** said students are served online during the break using Teams and Zoom.
- **Jess Jones** noted that the ratio of Faculty employees on the Calendar Committee is low--only five Faculty. There are considerably more committee members who are not Faculty, and the calendar needs to revolve around teaching. Five may not give Faculty proper representation. Also, while he understood the College is trying to balance meeting days, in Spring 2027 there are 14 Mondays due to the addition of Presidents' Day. He asked if this was a continuation of having to take Presidents' Day off in 2026 for the 250th Anniversary. [**Note:** *This day off was added to the calendar after committee development, likely due to the Governor's January 2026 request to incorporate Presidents' Day. This reduces the number of Monday meetings in Spring 2027 to 14.*]
- **Registrar Dani** said that the College is honoring Presidents' Day as a holiday, and this is continuing.
- **Jess** said that's an issue for lab classes. There are 14 Mondays, 16 Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 17 Wednesdays, which is problematic.
- **Registrar Dani** said this is important to bring back to the committee.
- **Niqui Young-Pringle-Brown** said the Education Department has several hybrid classes, and it's an issue when the number of days are this different. She asked if the calendar could be taken back to the committee for revision since it has not yet been approved by the Chancellor.
- **Provost Bratten** said the College could look at sister institutions; there is meeting flexibility with hybrid classes, and they don't need to meet the same day of the week.
- **Niqui** disagreed, as face-to-face (F2F) classes do not have the ability to "double up" [on missing days].
- **Provost Bratten** said she wasn't suggesting a change of hybrid meeting days during the semester.
- **Niqui** said that F2F instruction is really important with hybrid courses. If she has 14 meeting days but her colleague has 16 or 17 then the content doesn't translate in the same way.
- **Provost Bratten** said this is where academic freedom comes in, and the departments need to work that out.
- **Christy McCullough** clarified that the College isn't totally closed after the semester. Collegiate high schools start in July to get in their 180 days; they count 90 days backwards from the winter holiday close date.
- **Provost Bratten** said that when the College "closes" people are still on campus. There is a group that meets student needs; however, legally, if someone is not officially supposed to be there, then they're not supposed to be on campus.
- **Anthony** suggested a fix for the proposed Fall 2026 Semester: The current last day for Fall 2026 is Saturday, December 5. Grades are due Monday, December 7. He suggested making Monday December 7 an instructional day with grades due on



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Tuesday, December 8. That would be a Monday-for-Monday swap for the Thanksgiving Monday removal and address the complaints.

- **Provost Bratten** said the Registrar's Office needs time to process grades and report to financial aid. The Calendar Committee can look into the suggestions next time.
- **Jennifer** said that some calendar elements are not student-friendly. If half of the class is not present for Thanksgiving Monday, but a lab exam is moved because of hurricanes [for a hurricane day], it becomes difficult.
- **Registrar Dani** said the committee can take that into consideration next year.
- **Anthony** asked if any changes would be looked at for [the proposed calendar] this year, or only for next year.
- **Registrar Dani** said it would be for next year.
- **Anthony** reiterated that several had chimed in that the Fall Semester start date is really early.

Greg Harris motioned to approve the calendar. Andrew Coombs seconded the motion.

- **Jacqueline Gray** asked [based on a comment in the meeting chat] why some on the Calendar Committee had voted no on the calendar.
- **Jennifer** said she thought it had to do with the days Faculty were teaching and the abnormalities in the calendar.
- **Jacqueline** asked how the Faculty Senate could approve of this drafted calendar if the committee voted "no" to approve it.
- **Anthony** explained that the calendar passed the committee regardless of the "no" vote(s). Senate will decide whether or not it will pass Senate.
- **Laura Brimer** asked what the Senate's approval means. Is Senate approving the calendar as written or with changes?
- **Anthony** clarified that the changes being discussed [are not being incorporated] they are [only noting suggestions] for next year's calendar.

There was a mixed vote to approve the draft of the calendar. The motion passed.

- **Aaron Morgan** asked why Senate is being asked to approve the calendar without the opportunity to change it. Aren't the Faculty supposed to get to make changes?
- **Anthony** stated that the Senate is supposed to be able to make changes, but there doesn't seem to be willingness to make changes.
- **Jess** said that Senate is getting the calendar so late that this appears to be a "done deal." He asked if the Senate could be provided with the draft of the calendar sooner.
- **Heather Childree** said that per Polk State Procedure [6038: *Academic Calendar*] the calendar is supposed to go to the DBOT in March [after review by the Senate].
- **Anthony** indicated the calendar needs to be completed and brought by Administration sooner.
- **Aaron** said if it's already late, why not make it correct beforehand?



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- **Andrew** said looks like the Senate doesn't have a choice but to just approve it as is, as the College cannot register students for the Fall 2026 Semester until the Fall Registration dates are approved so CRNs can be published.
- **Anthony** said it feels as if Senate is being forced to approve this calendar because Administration is out of time and it's already late. Registration for the Fall 2026 Semester depends on its approval. The calendar needs to come to Senate in January if the DBOT needs to approve it in March. The Senate needs time to work out any problems. Perhaps the Calendar Committee could create two years' worth of calendars at once and have more Faculty on the Calendar Committee to ensure that these issues do not happen again.
- **Anthony** reiterated that Procedure [6038] says the calendar has to be at the DBOT in March, but it now will instead arrive in April, the same week that May starts. Senate has already voted, and this calendar has passed; however, the next calendar vote should have two years at a time.
- **Jennifer** said that essentially, the College's procedures are not being followed again.
- **Anthony** agreed, as the calendar will reach the Board for approval a day before May.
- **Aaron** asked if the Faculty could obtain a list of key deadlines so they can help Administrators remember key dates. Decisions are being made that Faculty have valuable input on. If Faculty are trying to help, what other key deadlines are there? Are friendly reminders needed? He gets friendly reminders from Administration. Maybe Faculty can provide friendly reminders of due dates for Administrators.

B. Review of Procedure 6002: *Committee System* (Presenter: Yvonne Valez)

Yvonne Valez [Coordinator of Human Resources] presented on behalf of Tamara Sakagawa [VP of the Communications and Public Affairs/Chief of Staff] and summarized the revisions.

She said that the procedure clarified responsibilities of nonvoting members and defined ad hoc committees. The Standing Committee information was separated and clarified. The group revising the procedure worked to streamline the annual preference list. The March timeframe was difficult for meeting April and May deadlines, so the group is looking to move this deadline to February because there are a handful of committees, such as the Calendar Committee and AQC, that need this procedure in place to continue their work. The attachment to the procedure had a huge title reorganization [due to several college reorganizations since the last review].

- **Andrew Coombs** asked about how The Arts are represented on the committees. For AQC and Assessment Coordinator, it was listed as Humanities but not The Arts, but the Distance Learning Committee lists The Arts and Humanities. This was before the departments were split up.
- **HR Coordinator Yvonne** said this was an oversight, and she'll bring it back to Tamara. Yvonne also said that there are already discussions about putting the



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Standing Committees List and rosters on the HR PIE page. She indicated that her goal is to have this done by the end of the year.

- **Anthony Cornett** said he has questions about Committee Composition. He wants to know if Procedure 6002 specifically indicates whether Committee Chairs are voting or nonvoting members. Traditionally, Chairs been non-voting members.
- **HR Coordinator Yvonne** said she would do a “deep dive” and get back to him.
- **Anthony** said that once the final vote is done on Procedure 6002, the number of voting members on each committee needs to be written in. He has concerns about the Faculty ratio being diluted. For example, for the AQC, he cites that the University of Florida’s AQC is 100% faculty, Florida Southwest State is 100%, Seminole’s ratio is 16 to 5, and Valencia’s is 19 to 2. He asked why more deans were being added to the committee lists.
- **HR Coordinator Yvonne** said that because of organizational changes adding more deans was necessary. Dean Resource Members were moved up, but the idea is to have one dean for quorum.
- **Anthony** said instead of adding deans [for AQC], there should be a Professional/Technical (Pro/Tech) representative and Nursing, Education, and Business/Technology Faculty Representatives [for the member line related to Faculty or Program Directors]. Instead of adding deans he wonders if those four spots can be filled with Faculty from each of those groups and take some of the workload off the deans.
- **Provost Amy Bratten** wondered if there should be one Faculty member from each of the baccalaureates. Health Sciences are classified as Pro/Tech employees, not Faculty.
- **Anthony** said the object is to increase the ratio of Faculty by adding from the various areas. This same addition of Faculty representation should apply to the Calendar Committee with Science, Education, and Nursing members [broader representation among the disciplines].
- **Gregory Johnson** stated that it would be helpful to have a workforce [Pro/Tech] representative who knows about these areas as opposed to a dean.
- **Anthony** asked if having the Registrar and Assistant Registrar on the Calendar Committee was duplication. There are 3 Assistant Registrars. Additionally, the Planning and Budget Council has 18 Administrators, 2 of which are Chairs, 2 Pro/Tech employees, 2 Career employees, 3 Faculty, and 2 students. Committee size is increasing greatly. Until 2015, this Committee had a membership with 6 Administrators, 1 Pro/Tech, 2 Career, 3 Faculty, and 1 student [i.e., more balanced ratios].
- **Yvonne** asked Anthony if he would like to meet to review the Committee Composition lists, and Anthony said that would be best.

Chris Botelho motioned to table Procedure 6002 and its Attachment. Greg Harris seconded. The motion carried.



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VII. New Business from the Floor

A. Lakeland Campus Biology Professor Nathaniel King: Statement to the Faculty Senate

I prepared this carefully, and I am reading it as written so that my words are precise and the record is clear. I ask that it be entered into the Senate record.

I will take questions from senators and faculty colleagues. I will not entertain questions, comments, or statements from administration, and I ask that the chair and parliamentarian respect that.

Colleagues,

I recently received written notice that my annual contract will not be renewed at the end of the Spring 2026 term. At the same time, I am still expected to continue carrying my full duties through the end of the semester.

I am saying that directly because I would rather speak to faculty myself than let administration manage the story through silence, rumor, timing, or selective retellings.

This did not start with some abstract dispute about process. This started with the College's failure to provide a safe and healthy learning environment. Mold was actively growing on my classroom walls while students were still being taught in that room. Everything that followed was the institution managing the consequences of its own failure, and eventually recasting me as the problem so it would not have to confront its own.

I filed a formal grievance under Procedure 6013 challenging a Final Written Warning that I believed was procedurally defective, inconsistently applied, and unsupported by any clearly identified rule. Procedure 6013 promises an impartial hearing and fair treatment, and it says no reprisals of any kind shall be taken against an employee for filing a grievance or participating in that process in good faith. Procedure 6085 says that if the College is going to investigate alleged wrongdoing, there is supposed to be an Investigative Officer, the parties are supposed to be able to give statements and provide evidence, and the officer is supposed to find that a specific rule, law, or procedure was violated.

Instead, what I experienced was what HR, according to my contemporaneous notes, described as "kind of protocol 6085, not officially an investigation, just guidelines."

And then I received a Final Written Warning for a "Safety Violation" without any specific rule being identified. Not a DBOT rule. Not a Polk State procedure. Not a section of the Chemical Hygiene Plan. Not a section of the Safety Manual. Just "safety," "protocols," and administrative handwaving after the fact. My grievance



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packet spells that out in detail: the discipline was imposed without any clearly cited governing policy, even after I formally asked the College to identify one.

Rules lose their meaning if they are not enforced.

And this was part of the broader pattern. I tried, repeatedly, to get clear answers on the record. I raised specific defects to the HR Director. I put them in writing. I followed up. What I got back was delay, vague replies, and institutional brush-off. I got told things were “fair and reasonable.” I got told there was “no provision” for the very written record I was trying to make. When I requested grievance-related records, those were channeled into a public-records process with a \$1400 price tag and a 3-month delay. I requested evidence to defend myself in a grievance hearing under Procedure 6013. I remind you, this was deemed “fair and reasonable” by HR.

At some point, that stops looking like confusion and starts looking like management of the story.

And even my own words were not safe from that. During my grievance hearing, HR Manager Traci Hamm turned my statement that I did not have a lab at home into the claim that I did not take the environmental samples home because I thought they were dangerous. Those are not the same statement. And the College’s own corrective action form stated that I maintained the samples were non-hazardous. That matters, because once your own words start coming back altered into something more useful to the institution, you are no longer just dealing with a process. You are dealing with a narrative.

They recast me as the villain to make their narrative work, because that was easier than admitting the institution had failed.

I held up a mirror. Instead of confronting what it saw, the College chose to get rid of the mirror.

And here is the part people should really sit with. My grievance was not casual. It was not a frivolous complaint. It included a 79-page single-spaced narrative and more than 500 pages of supporting evidence. I filed it on October 27, 2025. My grievance hearing did not occur until March 6, 2026, more than four months later. And during that entire time, I complied with the very discipline letter I was challenging.

So when people talk about this like it was some routine HR matter, no. It was an enormous amount of labor to get heard at all.

And after all of that, the grievance outcome still did not vindicate the College’s handling of this matter. It acknowledged defects. The final decision stated that Human Resources documentation should better adhere to Procedure 6013, that Procedure 6085 should be reviewed and clarified, and that specific



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rules should be noted on warnings whenever possible. In other words, the process had problems, the record reflected that, and the warning remained in place.

As I recall from my 90-day disciplinary follow-up meeting, Dean Rivera-Marchand told me that this should have been handled as coaching. He also said he would try to get the letter removed from my file, which only reinforces that even he understood this had gone too far. He indicated that once the matter moved above him, he no longer controlled it.

That does not absolve him. It implicates him.

He signed the discipline. He had the opportunity to insist that College policies and procedures were followed when it mattered. He had the chance to stop it, narrow it, or insist it be done correctly. He did none of those things. He chose complicity.

And while all of this was going on, I still did the work.

I kept teaching.

I kept serving.

I kept publishing.

I kept collecting data on active-learning strategies.

I won a travel award to present the innovative assessment strategies I use in my classes.

They asked me to take on additional classes in this same semester.

They had me serve on a hiring committee to help choose my replacement.

They needed my expertise.

They needed my labor.

They needed my judgment.

They were willing to use all of that.

They just were not willing to keep it.

That contradiction says more than any carefully worded administrative explanation ever could.

This was not the removal of someone who stopped contributing.

This was the disposal of someone who remained useful, productive, and inconvenient.

This is not me standing up here with an axe to grind. This is me telling you where the road leads.

This is not just my mess. It is a warning to each of you.

If a faculty member can follow the rules, build the record, do the work, comply the entire time, and still be discarded after the institution admits defects in its own process, then none of you should be under any illusion about what those written protections are worth when they become inconvenient.



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That is why I am saying this out loud. When systems meant to ensure fairness instead discourage dissent or obscure truth, silence becomes complicity.

There are, of course, those who would prefer that none of this be said aloud. That is how institutions protect themselves when the truth becomes inconvenient: through silence, delay, pressure, and the hope that exhaustion will do the rest.

But words will always retain their power.

Their power to make the record clearer.

Their power to outlast the meeting, the email chain, the talking points, and the quiet effort to make all of this seem smaller than it was.

Words offer the means to meaning, and for those who will listen, the enunciation of truth. And the truth is that there is something terribly wrong with this institution.

There is something terribly wrong with an institution that writes protections into policy and then treats them as optional when they are invoked.

There is something terribly wrong with an institution that acknowledges defects in process and preserves the outcome anyway.

There is something terribly wrong with an institution that can still rely on a faculty member's expertise while deciding that faculty member is disposable.

There is something terribly wrong with an institution that would rather reshape the story and recast a person as the problem than confront its own failures honestly.

Some bear more responsibility for that than others.

Some made decisions.

Some signed documents.

Some had opportunities to correct course and did not.

They know who they are.

And so do I.

I attended Polk State as a student. Polk State is where I taught my first college class. I did not want my time here to end like this.

I gave this institution more than one chance to de-escalate.

A clean process could have done that.

A narrower and fairer response could have done that.

A little honesty could have done that.

Instead, the institution chose escalation. It chose contradiction. It chose convenience over integrity.

That wasn't a misunderstanding, it was a choice.

I am not asking this Senate to relitigate my personnel file.

I am asking this Senate to recognize what this says about institutional trust and about the actual security of faculty who are told to rely on written policy.



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If anti-reprisal language means anything, it must mean something when it is inconvenient.

If due process means anything, it must mean something when it is tested.

If the rules only apply when they cost nothing, then they are nothing more than institutional theater.

You do not abandon principle once and walk away unchanged. Once the rules become negotiable, trust becomes negotiable too.

If we abandon fairness, transparency, and due process the moment upholding them requires courage, then they were never values at all. They were echoes of what this institution once claimed to believe.

I said at the end of my grievance that what happens next will say far more about the College than it will about me.

I believe that now more than ever.

The College has already acted. What matters now is what that action reveals.

The College will not have the right to control the truth.

The College will not have the comfort of pretending this was a clean process.

The College will not have the luxury of institutional amnesia.

What has been done here should be said aloud and remembered for what it says about this institution.

The truth is simple: there is something terribly wrong with this institution.

Thank you.

The floor was opened for questions:

- **Jennifer** expressed deep sadness for what has happened to Nathaniel, and for the loss of 2 A&P faculty members in four months, which has cleared out the Lakeland Science faculty.
- **Jennifer asked:** Do you teach Microbiology?
- **Nathaniel:** I do.
- **Jennifer:** Do you know how to safely handle [mold] samples?
- **Nathaniel:** I do. I first learned how to do this at Polk State in 2013.
- **Jennifer:** Did you follow all OSHA and EPA standards?
- **Nathaniel:** Yes.
- **Jennifer:** What ultimately was the problem with the whole thing?
- **Nathaniel:** I'm not sure. To be completely honest, I'm not sure.
- **Jennifer** expressed confusion about why he was in trouble for trying to determine what he and others were being exposed to while mold was growing on the models, walls, and ceiling. She stated that the College did not test LTB for mold in December 2025 as they were supposed to, so faculty do not know if it is still there. She asked if Nat was hoping to determine information about prior and continued exposure.
- **Nathaniel** said, "The truth was being obscured from us. That was the impetus for my taking the samples and to look at them."



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- **Jennifer** asked how his students were responding to him not teaching any longer.
- **Nathaniel** noted that his students are upset that he will no longer be teaching at the College.
- **Jennifer** stated that Nat's a great professor. She reiterated that this was another great professor who has been removed from her department in four months. She is very concerned.
- **Aaron Morgan** thanked him for sharing and said it was probably the best thing he could do so that Faculty members could make decisions accordingly.
- **Gregory Johnson** said this is the first he is hearing about this situation, and he is so sorry this has happened; it is devastating. He wished Nathaniel the very best and hopes Nat's passion for teaching remains bright so he can continue to be amazing.
- **Michael Derry** asked for Nat's 79-page document to share with his department.
- **Nathaniel** said that there's no confidential information in the document and that he would share it with [Parliamentarian] Michael, [President] Anthony, and [Secretary] Heather.

B. College Safety Concerns (Presenter: Jennifer Shaw)

Jennifer asked that the following document be recorded in the Faculty Senate Minutes. She was threatened by a student and brought forward concerns regarding the slow response, the discipline outcome, her continued safety, and the student's current class attendance on the Winter Haven Campus.

Case Study: Student Threatens Faculty Member without Penalty

Synopsis

A student asked to schedule an exam on a different day which is against the syllabus unless there is a documented extenuating and severe emergency (definition/examples are provided in the syllabus).

The student failed to take the exam on the scheduled date, emailed the TLCC to have it changed (which they did not do), and then proceeded to email me many times over spring break (exam was scheduled for March 13th).

Once we returned back from spring break, I checked my email and responded that an extension could be provided once documentation is received; student failed to provide documentation. On March 24th, I received numerous emails from the student that were escalating. I stopped responding. I forwarded the emails to the Dean of Academics and the Dean of Student Services, requesting for the student to be removed. The student was not removed.

Here is an example of one such email from the student sent on March 24th at 8:24am:

"Your offensive and on a high horse you need to get off your no one special to why I need to explain why I can't do something your not my mother or



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My keeper keep your place in life as who your are a nobody I'm coming to the school and you will be handled either by your boss or your bosses boss cause we taking this far as possible"

She continued to email me multiple times that day after this.

After March 25th, email conversation from the student ceased until April 8th, when I entered the exam grade in as a 0 since the student failed to provide documentation. The student then emailed me right after and called to yell at Dean Rivera Marchand. Here is the email the student sent (April 8th):

"I don't fuck with you . Dead serious imma cause you a problem watch"

The student was then removed from my class on April 8th but continued to email me through April 9th with subject titles such as "I know your husband hates you." Again, I did not engage/respond. Dr. Bonney then reached out to IT to have email blocked on April 9th.

This was all going on (April 9th) while I was catching a connecting flight to come home...the student has an arrest record for battery and lives about 15 min from my house. I was instructed by Dean Rivera Marchand to call the Osceola Sheriff's Department which I did while on my 10 minute layover. OCSO called my son's school to have the SRO escort him to the pickup gate for my boyfriend to pick him. My son freaked out when he was called to SRO; he thought that my plane crashed and that I died.

On Friday April 10th, I received a call from Dean Rivera Marchand on his personal cell at 4:54PM. I was immediately informed that VP Webb and Provost Bratten were on speaker. Provost Bratten reprimanded me for informing the President regarding this situation; I had still not been notified regarding the student's consequences. I then learned that the student received a W [withdrawal] from my course. I asked if it was an administrative drop where it would not show up on the student's transcript, and was assured that she received a W (she had an F in the course up to this point). I was also informed that the student is still enrolled in two classes on the Winter Haven campus and is allowed to attend them. However, I should not come on campus unless it is absolutely necessary.

CORE ISSUES:

1. **What disciplinary action should the College take upon a student who threatens a faculty member?**
 1. **ANSWER:** *It is the Dean of Student Services to decide the level of seriousness and disciplinary action*
 2. *According to Procedure 5028, Part III there are a variety of Sanctions that can be issued ranging from "lesser sanctions to expulsion."*
 3. *Procedure 5028 also states (A) that the Dean of Student Services is responsible for determining level of sanction.*



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2. **Why is the student being rewarded instead of receiving consequences for her actions?**
 1. Why was I not asked what I thought would be an appropriate action?
 2. Why is she still allowed on campus but if I go on campus, I need to have security escort?
 3. She was failing the course, it was too late to withdraw, and she got withdrawn anyways. No further consequences.
3. **As a faculty member, would you feel safe having a student such as this in your class or Health Science program to which she is applying?**
4. **Was the Care Team [Procedure 5038] involved in any decision making?**

[**Note:** The Academic Dean, Provost, and VP of Student Services are Resource Members of The Polk State Care Team (Procedure 5038). It is unclear if the Care Team has met.]

- **Jennifer** informed the Senate that these Rules [4.01] and Procedures [5028, 5038] were not followed. She wondered why the student was rewarded with a withdrawal from a course she was already failing. She states she is fearful for her and her son's lives and is still terrified that the student will show up at her house.
- **Aaron Morgan** clarified that Jennifer was threatened by a student, the student was removed from her roster, but a note was not made on the student's record.
- **Jennifer** said she filed a *Student Disruption Form*, but that discipline only lasts until the student graduates. There are 12 different disciplinary actions Administration could have taken.
- **Aaron** asked if the Dean of Student Services is the one to act, as he had run into this before.
- **Jacqueline Grey** said she too had a very aggressive student last year and filed what was supposed to be filed. The student was removed, and that was the end of it. She wonders if it's easier to just "cave in" to the student and deduct 10-20% of a grade because they get irate when told no, and she fears they could come back to harm her. It might lead to more aggressive behavior.
- **Jennifer** understood what Jacqueline was recommending, but the student who threatened her is not a high school student. Jennifer could see her police record. Also, if she made exceptions to her policy, she would be giving extensions every 8 seconds. There are firm boundaries, and one job faculty have is to prepare students for the workforce. She has students in her classes who are going to be in healthcare handling medication, where there won't be do-overs.
- **Jennifer** continued that she tried to work with the student for a week and a half. She asked for documentation of an extenuating circumstance or emergency, but the student said she was only travelling and never gave her any documentation that would warrant an extension. She could not grant an extension based on this information. She was terrified to be enroute by plane and be worried about her son.



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- **Chris Botelho** said that ultimately Faculty have the right to a safe workspace provided by our employer. He asked why this student was not trespassed since this situation meets the legal threshold for a felony under sections 836.10 and 784.048 *Florida Statute*. He has had students get combative but never to this level. He is concerned about why more action was not taken to protect Jennifer.
- **Christy McCullough** expressed concern for the other professors who still have this student in their classes [on the Winter Haven Campus]. If Jennifer needs protection on campus, don't all the student's other professors also need protection from her?
- **Jennifer** stated that it was also strange to be called by the Dean and two VPs late on a Friday afternoon and then to be asked if she thought everything was handled right. She saw what happened to Bill Caldecutt and Nat King and felt that she could not trust or speak freely.
- **Chris** asked that given that we have Polk Sheriff's Office deputies on campus, at what point should Faculty involve them and bypass Administration.
- **John Barberet** said when he contacted Reggie Webb [VP Student Services] about threats, he said call 911. Barberet had an email with a list of what to do.
- **Jennifer** stated that on March 24, the student began to threaten that she was going to come to campus to make Jennifer's life as hard as Jennifer made it for the student. Jennifer immediately forwarded those emails to Bert Rivera-Marchand [Dean of Academic Affairs] and Keith Bonney [Dean of Student Services, Lakeland]. Then she said she waited. She then called [Dean] Bert's Assistant, Ashley [**Note:** *Two Ashleys work for Dean Bert Rivera-Marchand, so it is unclear which one took the call.*], and asked to speak with Bert, but Bert was in a meeting, and Ashley did not pull him from that meeting. It took getting [College] Officer Garcia's phone number from David Sutton [former Associate Vice President of Academics] to get help. Still, upon contacting Officer Garcia, he said there was not enough to warrant action at that time, but he went and pulled Keith [Bonney]. Jennifer asked for the student to be removed from her class on March 24, but it took until April 8 for action to be taken.
- **Laura Brimer** said that Jennifer's situation is not an isolated incident. Laura has been threatened, stalked online, and cornered in her office by students. While she appreciates Reggie Webb saying to call 911, it would help Faculty if actions to be taken were codified in Procedure. The language in the procedures and the Student Code of Conduct [DBOT Rule 4.01] need to be strengthened. Male faculty members are not threatened by students as often as females are.
- **Jennifer** said she is unsure of whether the Care Team [Procedure 5038] was used. Rule 4.01 states threats are "prohibited." It is not just about getting the Dean of Students involved. Jennifer asked why she did not get a say in the student's discipline and the student was rewarded. She now cannot come to class unless she has an escort.
- **Andrew** thanked her for bringing this up. He said that there are several other professors with similar experiences. The College needs to make sure that all faculty members are comfortable on campus.
- **Gregory Johnson** expressed that anyone who threatens safety should be dealt with immediately through all means necessary.



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- **Dirk Valk** also expressed concern. He asked if Jennifer were able to seek a restraining order against this student.
- **Jennifer** said she spoke with a detective, and they put notes in a file. She will probably pursue a restraining order against this student.
- **Dirk** clarified that Jennifer is forced to rely on the College for safety.
- **Jennifer** again expressed concern because the student lives near her home. The student kept contacting Jennifer even after she was removed. Dr. Bonney contacted IT and had her blocked from emailing Jennifer [she does not know if she is still making threats].
- **Dirk** noted that blocking an email does not make the workplace safer.
- **Anthony** said that this topic needs to be revisited and the *Student Handbook* needs to be revised. The College needs a zero-tolerance policy.
- **Aaron** commented that the College needs to discuss the responsibility for deciding a student's punishment. It is disturbing that the student was not immediately removed from class.
- **Dirk** said that Jennifer waited two weeks for a [class-removal] resolution. Twenty-four hours should have been enough.
- **Jennifer** asked why [Dean] Bert remained in a meeting for two hours while she waited to hear from him.
- **Provost Amy Bratten** apologized to Jennifer if the VPs' and her presence on speaker phone seemed "shady." The whole point, she said, was to see what Jennifer wanted Administration to do, not for them to ask whether she was happy with how the situation was handled. Amy said that Academics does not have a say in this situation; it is in the Student Services Office purview. Amy said the President is taking measures to get the procedures and policies updated. **The Provost** stated that she and Aaron Morgan discussed updating the Faculty with security measures in the fall. She also said that Administration worked over the weekend on this issue and apologized for how things were handled.
- **Gregory** wondered how this student is still allowed to take courses [at the Winter Haven Campus].
- **Provost Bratten** said that is still being investigated as part of the progressive discipline procedure. It does not mean that this will be how it will be in the future. It won't be open to interpretation in the future.

VIII. Adjournment

Misty Sparling motioned to adjourn. Dirk Valk seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting ended at 5:51 p.m.



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